

Improving the Effectiveness and Responsiveness of Organizational Development through the OD Unification Model

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<p>The Leadership Advisor commissioned this thesis. It is an international OD consulting company that was founded in the USA in 2009. In 2012, it began expanding operations to Scandinavia and Europe. In 2013, more clients were acquired in the Australasian market. As this international expansion continues, the development of intellectual property to apply across various cultures became a priority. The areas of expertise for The Leadership Advisor are leadership development, organizational culture and employee engagement. The company's focus is making organizations human-centric as a way to be profitable.</p> <p>In addition to two years of my own literature research on human groups in the behavioral sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology), qualitative research in the form of a semi-formal survey was also conducted to develop this product for The Leadership Advisor. The goal was to have a product that would improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD as it is impacted by leadership, culture and engagement. The parameters were that it must be minimally invasive in its implementation and as culturally neutral as possible.</p> <p>The definitions of leadership, culture and engagement were explored, as was the theory behind four current OD models. A comparative analysis was conducted between the theory and what actually happens in practice in organizations. The sample included ten participants, both internal and external HR/OD professionals. Trends were documented and analyzed.</p> <p>The results of this research produced the OD Unification Model. It was called this, as the biggest challenge is the current, fragmented approach to OD. The model is holistic in nature and is a non-intrusive framework that is flexible for use in any organization.</p> <p>The Leadership Advisor is extremely satisfied with the model. It has been presented to a number of senior HR/OD professionals and was eagerly received. The model will be used to train new consultants as they join The Leadership Advisor. Licensing the use of the model by other OD consulting companies is also being considered.</p>	
Keywords Organizational Development, Human Resource Development, Leadership Development, Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement	

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1 Introduction

Organizational Development (OD) is an essential component of creating and maintaining a successful business. Three key elements of OD – leadership development, company culture and employee engagement – are both abstract and difficult to measure. There are various approaches to OD, especially as it is influenced by the above-mentioned three areas; however, the effectiveness and responsiveness of those approaches remains questionable. Competitive advantage is what truly moves companies forward and doing OD well is crucial to make this a reality for organizations. If leadership, culture and engagement are done well, OD efforts are much more responsive and effective overall. Intuitively developing an internal baseline that is unique to the organization carries much more impact on competitive advantage, and ultimately profitability, than feverishly reacting to external benchmarks within an industry or sector.

1.1 Background for the project

The Leadership Advisor commissioned this thesis. The company noticed a lack of responsiveness and frustrations with efficacy among clients, regarding leadership development, company culture and employee engagement and their collective influence on OD work. Therefore, a product that improves the responsiveness and effectiveness of OD – as leadership, culture and engagement influence it – will be created.

The goal is to create a product that can be used internationally with clients of The Leadership Advisor as the company works with them to improve leadership development, company culture and employee engagement. The company has noticed that many clients feel their OD work is somewhat disjointed. Since the case company works in the areas of leadership, culture and engagement, the product will focus only on these three areas of expertise.

As a means to meet the needs of its clients, as well as continue to add value, The Leadership Advisor is interested in the development of a product that includes two important aspects: minimally invasive to operations in its implementation and as cultural-

ly neutral as possible. The case company believes this will make the applicability of the product much broader than if these elements were ignored.

Key questions that will facilitate meeting the project objective include:

1. What are the perceived limitations of current OD practices that contribute to the challenges and shortcomings? (from both HR professionals and OD consultants)
2. What previous advances in OD efforts proved the most useful in practice? Why?
3. What are some viable alternatives to overcome any challenges or shortcomings?
4. What natural themes emerge from theory research and interview responses?

1.2 Project overview

This thesis is based on developing a product that can be used to improve the responsiveness of OD work in the areas of leadership development, organizational culture and employee engagement, as well as its effectiveness.

This project is especially appealing to me, as I have spent two years doing desktop research on human groups, out of a personal interest. I have studied human groups in three different disciplines: anthropological, sociological and psychological. Leadership development, company culture and employee engagement, and their impact on OD, all enjoy contributions from these behavioral sciences and played a key role in developing the product.

As the next step in the process (see figure 1), further desktop research was conducted on the key concepts of this thesis. This research was used to find relevant theory associated with the project objective, and was combined with the previous research done in the behavioral sciences. After developing the theory framework, other qualitative data was gleaned from semi-structured interviews with HR/OD professionals who work as employees of organizations, as well as external HR/OD consultants, and reviewed.

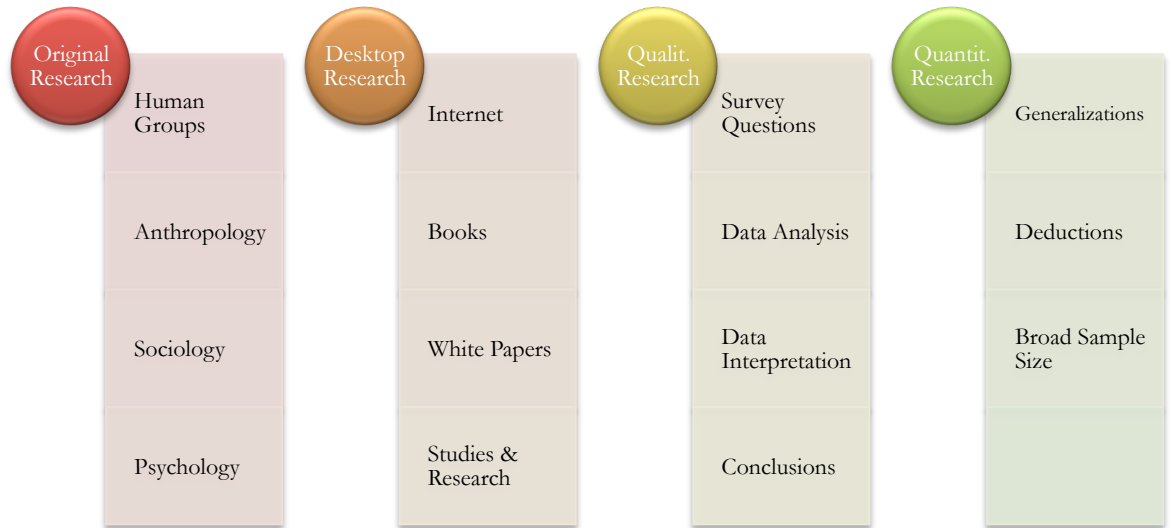


Figure 1. Research process

The practical implementation, as communicated through interviews with HR professionals and OD consultants, has been compared against one of the four models listed in subchapter 3.5. When more than one model was in use within a single organization, the interview framework has been designed to explore each model and the resultant data as a means to discover any gaps between the theory and practical application of each model.

Other considerations and input have been derived from my own professional experience in working in both a management and consulting capacity. The role of this data source, however, is to augment the research and not unduly influence it. Primary considerations have been given to empirical research as it relates to the scope and purpose of this thesis. There have been some minor quantitative elements to the research due to the nature of the project objective. A certain amount of generalizations and deductions from the data collected were required in order to fully comply with the project objective.

1.2.1 Project objective

The project objective (PO) of this this is to develop a culturally neutral product that improves the efficacy and responsiveness of OD – as it is influenced by leadership development, company culture and employee engagement – and is minimally intrusive to operations in it implementation.

1.2.2 Project tasks

The above project objective has been divided into the following project tasks (PT):

PT1: Assemble and review data from desktop research regarding the behavioral sciences.

PT2: Assemble and review data from desktop research regarding the key concepts for this thesis.

PT3: Understand the benefits and challenges for HRD professionals with current OD models and practices as they relate to leadership, culture and engagement through semi-structured interviews.

PT4: Understand the benefits and challenges for OD consultants of current OD models and practices as they relate to leadership, culture and engagement through semi-structured interviews.

PT5: Recognize and document any emerging themes during data review and analysis.

PT6: Develop product based on research and PO guidelines.

1.3 Demarcation

The focus of the thesis is an OD issue that is tightly defined by three areas of influence: leadership development, company culture and employee engagement. The HRD functions affected by these three areas will benefit from this thesis, however they are

not the primary focus of it. Addressing leadership, culture and engagement as they influence the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD is the primary goal of this thesis.

The HRD functions impacted by the thesis will include: OD, organizational design, training and development and performance management systems. These are peripheral connections to its focus and scope. It is not the intent, purpose nor scope of this thesis to focus explicitly on OD, organizational design, training and development or performance management systems; however, it is anticipated that by meeting the project objective, these particular areas will be influenced as well as realize a benefit. (See figure 2)

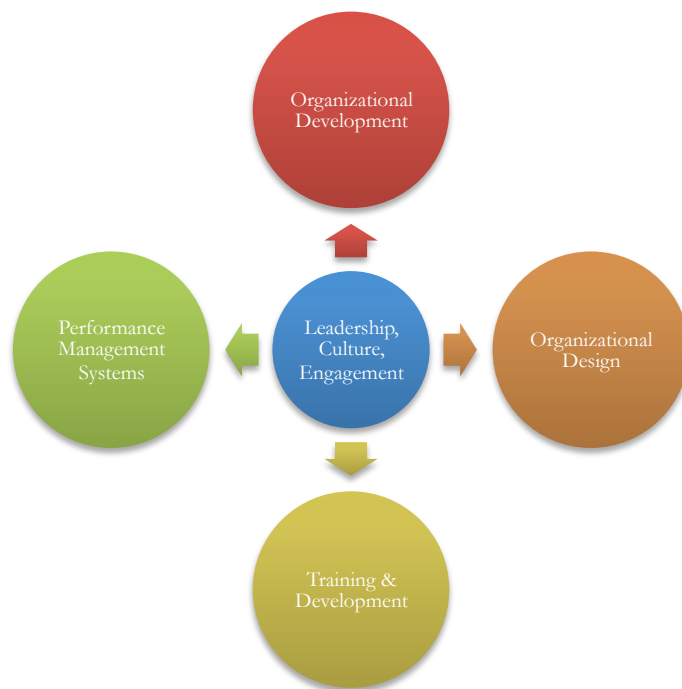


Figure 2. Demarcation

1.4 Benefit to the company

The Leadership Advisor commissioned this thesis. It is an OD consulting company that focuses its expertise in the areas of leadership development, company culture and employee engagement as a means to serve its international clients. The primary point of contact between The Leadership Advisor and its clients is the HR department within companies and occasionally the C-Suite, depending on organizational structure.

The company is currently implementing their global expansion strategy, therefore the development of a product keenly focused on the company's areas of expertise makes for a suitable and valuable topic for the thesis. The successful fulfilment of the project objective provides value to this stakeholder. They are able to further distinguish themselves from their competition and offer a minimally intrusive, yet highly effective product to their current and future clients. This company is a primary stakeholder.

1.5 Other benefitting parties

With billions of dollars being spent annually to improve organizational performance, getting it done well with minimal investment is critical to improve ROI. As the global marketplace continues to increase in pace, this ability is rapidly becoming a crucial component to strategy in order to gain or maintain competitive advantage. Current and future clients of The Leadership Advisor are stakeholders. They also are positioned to benefit from having access to a product that has been developed to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD efforts. The fact that is developed in a way that is minimally intrusive to their daily operations in its implementation adds to that value. Purposefully making the product as culturally neutral as possible only expands the size of this stakeholder group.

A second stakeholder group that benefits from achieving the project objective of the thesis is the field of HRM. Although the primary focus of the thesis is aligned with the functions of HRD, the entire Human Resources Organization (HRO) within a company will find value in the project objective. Providing a more effective and responsive way to facilitate leadership, culture and engagement influencing OD will empower HR professionals across the HRO in their respective functions. Being able to implement with minimal intrusion to daily operations increases the speed with which it can be implemented and thus minimizes its costs. The focus on cultural neutrality as a part of the project objective will support diversity and inclusion efforts as well. This is important for reinforcing the position of HR as a strategic partner within a company.

1.6 Key concepts

This thesis contains four key concepts: OD, leadership development, company culture and employee engagement. The theory behind each of these concepts will aid in the development of the product for the case company. Below are brief presentations of each concept.

Organizational development has a primary goal of enhancement through planned change. The aim is to improve the total effectiveness of an organization. It attempts to accomplish that through proper alignment of operationally critical areas with the individual. These areas include: external environment, leadership, strategy, culture, mission, reward systems, work policies, structure, information systems and work procedures. (Bradford & Burke 2005, 78.)

Leadership is primarily an exercise in social influence. It is usually most recognizable when it is an individual, who seeks to obtain the contribution of others as a means to complete a task or series of tasks. The intellectual flexibility and ability to adapt intelligence to meet current needs is imperative for leaders to be both efficient and effective. (Chemers 1997, 1.)

Intrinsically, company culture is a series of customs and rights. It is most effective when it is approached and treated as a model in anthropology. It is made up of norms, behavior patterns, values, traditions and rituals. There is also an implication of integration and structural stability within culture. Culture is dynamic in nature as it constantly undergoes changes that are precipitated by accumulated learning as well as a shared history. Every company culture experiences the need to survive, grow and adapt as a means to provide for internal integration that affects its ability to function. (Schein 1997, 2.)

While it has taken some time to arrive where engagement is currently, the most recent definition of employee engagement has taken into consideration the values, goals and strategy of the organization as well as the same elements as they relate to the employee. Engagement has come to represent a functional way of developing the organization

through the development of the individuals within the organization. Previous attempts at this idea tended to favor one side or the other. (Rice, Marlow, Masarech 2012, 108.)

2 Definitions and OD models

The theory for this thesis is based on establishing accepted definitions for OD, leadership, culture and engagement. It will also explore four current OD models and compare that theory with the results from the qualitative research used for this thesis. These OD models include: Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, Shewhart's PDSA Cycle, McLean's OD Process Model and Appreciative Inquiry.

The goal of this is to understand any gaps in the theory and practical application in organizations as a means to establish current effectiveness and responsiveness. This will also determine a baseline for the level of interest in the current models available to OD professionals, as well as shed light on viable alternatives that are of interest to them. A particular area of interest is what frustrations may be prevalent among OD professionals regarding the most common and current models. A secondary area of interest is the frequency of use of OD models and reasoning behind those choices.

2.1 Organizational development

Organizational development: "Focuses on assuring healthy inter- and intra-unit relationships and helping groups initiate and manage change. OD's primary emphasis is on relationships and processes between and among individuals and groups. Its primary intervention is influence on the relationship of individuals and groups to effect an impact on the organization as a system." (McLagan 1989, 7.)

Since it was made popular by Douglas McGregor and Richard Beckhard in the mid-1950s (Weisbord 1987), OD has been an intense focus for improving organizations. The contemporary study of leadership started in the 1940s (Brungardt, et al. 1997). The notion of organizational culture began gaining momentum in the 1980s (Smircich 1983). The first formal definition of employee engagement, given by William Kahn, was offered in 1990 (Kahn 1990, 705). In this sense, OD – as it is influenced by leadership, culture and engagement – is still in a relatively nascent phase.

In order to understand its value and progression, many companies took to studying OD's effect on organizations. Established research companies like Gallup began the

process of measuring its effectiveness, as well as the various ways in which it impacted the organization. Later, more specialized research companies and consulting companies began their own research; companies such as: Boston Consulting Group, Kenexa, BlessingWhite, Price Waterhouse Cooper and Ernst & Young. Over the past 30 years, there has been a vast body of knowledge created that painstakingly reveals the path OD has taken in these three key areas.

Initially, there was a significant amount of growth and success in each of these areas. Per usual, when there is a refinement of focus, problems tend to become self-evident. This improved way of diagnosing organizational challenges redirects attention in order to facilitate solution development. Current research indicates that each of these areas has plateaued in many respects, but there is still a considerable amount of improvement yet to be had.

Based on the above definition, as suggested by McLagan (1989, 7), OD is systemic in its implementation – although an open system – on a fundamental level; however, it is also based on humanistic values. This presents somewhat of a paradox. Systems, at least in Western cultures, are typically linear. The human condition is holistic and unkempt. It is my opinion that this seeming sense of opposing forces is what creates much of the creative tension regarding a successful implementation of OD for most organizations.

There have been other definitions that speak to this issue. McLean (2005, 9) points out how OD is more of a process or activity, but it is based on behavioral sciences. He also expands the impact and reach of OD to potentially be of benefit to individuals, groups/teams, communities, countries or even humanity itself.

The primary goal of OD is enhancement through planned change. The aim is to improve the total effectiveness of an organization. It attempts to accomplish that through proper alignment of operationally critical areas with the individual. These areas include: external environment, leadership, strategy, culture, mission, reward systems, work poli-

cies, structure, information systems and work procedures. (Bradford & Burke 2005, 85.)

McLean (2005, 11) goes on to clarify, stating that the total system is made up of inter-dependent parts and that is the principle focus of OD work within organizations. He asserts that the approach must be collaborative in nature in order to ultimately be successful. The dynamic nature of the environment in which OD is perpetuated is juxtaposed on the planned strategy for change management. This is why it requires a significant amount of flexibility in order to be fully effective.

Due to the planned nature of OD, it carries with it a sense of interventionism. As the needs and goals of the organization adjust, the direction of the human element that comprises the organization must be adjusted as well in order to align effort and focus with strategy. In all my research for this thesis, the common theme has been how the human condition affects the organization and how that can be predicted and directed in a way that is of benefit to both the individual and the company. I see this as the true focal point of OD.

While some organizations that solely represent the interests of OD professionals – such as OD Network and The OD Institute – insist that OD is an independent field, they appear to be alone on this issue. Within the past decade, a number of professional organizations have positioned OD as a subset of Human Resource Development (HRD). In addition to the *Journal of Organizational Development*, below is a partial list of the professional organizations that view OD as a part of HRD. (McLean 2005, 10.) (See table 1).

Table 1. Organizations that place OD as a part of HRD

Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD)	Academy of Human Resource Development (India) (AHRD)	Korean Academy of Human Resource Development (KAHRD)
Academy of Management (AOM)	American Society for Training and Development	Euresform

	(ASTD)	
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)	Society for Industrial and Organizational Development (SIOD)	University Forum of Human Resource Development (UFHRD)

To be clear, there has been a functional distinction made between Human Resource Development (HRD) – for the purpose of this thesis, OD will be considered a subset of this discipline – and Human Resource Management (HRM). As a means of continuity, this distinction will be used throughout this work. It is not within the scope of this thesis to prove or disprove the accuracy of this position.

Although these two areas of HR vary, there is some overlap. HRD and HRM share some common functions – organization/job design, human resource planning, performance management systems and selection and staffing. Where HRD diverges in function from HRM is in the areas of training and development, OD and career development. (McLean 2005, 11.)

As previously shown in Figure 1, the four main areas of HRD that this thesis indirectly touches are: OD, organization design, training and development and performance management systems. Leadership development, company culture and employee engagement are connected to each of these areas in significant and unique ways.

2.2 Leadership development

Leadership: “A process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.” (Chemers 1997, 1)

Chemers (2011, 2) goes on to point out that the effectiveness of leadership, as well as the organization overall, lies within the construct of intelligence. According to psychologists, intelligence is not solely the amount of knowledge attained, but rather having the faculties to effectively function in the world. These faculties do, however, include the storage of knowledge and skills, which usually come from academic learning and/or personal experience. The pivotal component of intelligence is that the world is

an ever-changing environment. This necessitates an extrapolation of existing skills and knowledge in order to apply them in a different context from which they were initially acquired.

It is this flexibility that also supports effectiveness, as well as responsiveness, for organizations. Data based systems help manage things internally, but they must not be so static and rigid that they become impervious to the ability to adapt to change. The agility and adaptability of a system to cope with change determine the intelligence of both an organization and a leader. (Chemers 2011, 2.)

A leader must carry the proper influence so they can establish the norms necessary to structure systems, but must also remain responsive to change and also influence adaptation to that change. In that sense, leaders create a context from which things develop and function within organizations. It is because of this, leadership is the foundation on which everything must be built in order for it to ultimately be successful for the organization. (Chemers 2011, 2.)

Leadership goes far beyond a job description or title. It is a way of being as well as a way of doing. Leadership is a perspective of people, problems and solution development. It is a world-view and an attitude. It is a soft skill that is difficult to measure; only its results can be measured. The abstract nature of leadership lends a sense of complexity in not only defining it, but also developing it within one's self and others.

In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, an inordinate number of leadership failures were exposed. The average tenure of a Fortune 500 CEO is 4.6 years (8.6 for all CEOs) (Jarrett 2013) and the main reason that the board fires them is due to a lack of leadership (Neff 2008). Yet during 2012 in the United States, more than \$13 billion was spent on leadership training (Lamoureux 2012).

2.3 Company culture

Company culture: "Represents the collective values, beliefs and principles of organizational members." History, organizational function, product type, manage-

ment/leadership style, national cultures and company strategy all impact company culture (Needle 2004, 44).

Intrinsically, company culture is a series of customs and rights. It is most effective when it is approached and treated as a model in anthropology. It is made up of norms, behavior patterns, values, traditions and rituals. There is also an implication of integration and structural stability within culture. Culture is dynamic in nature as it constantly undergoes changes that are precipitated by accumulated learning as well as a shared history. Every company culture experiences the need to survive, grow and adapt as a means to provide for internal integration that affects its ability to function. (Schein 1997, 1.)

Company culture is striated in its design. The more superficial layer consists of visible components (referred to as artifacts by Schein), such as: language, products, creations and style (clothing, social interaction, stories, etc.). It is easy to observe, but due to the ambiguous nature of common symbols within that culture it can be challenging to decipher. (Schein 1997, 2.)

Secondarily, espoused values are where most people begin recognizing culture. Group learning tends to reflect the original values that have been established. Things begin as a shared value, and eventually evolve into a shared assumption. These strategies and justifications begin with the leader and become assimilated by the organization over time and through stories and experiences. (Schein 1997, 3.)

The deepest, and most personal, component of company culture is that of basic assumptions. These are characterized by a number of things, but the most common aspect is they have usually evolved into something unconscious and present as beliefs that are taken for granted. (Schein 1997, 3.)

It is here where the individual contributes to the perpetuation of culture. This is a groomed behavioral response to the repetition of solution development to problems. It is heavily influenced by: what is paid attention to, meanings ascribed to things or ac-

tions, emotional reaction to culture itself and what actions should be taken based on circumstances. The construct of culture provides cognitive stability, which include defense mechanisms. This is a psychological need for humans and culture helps meet that need. (Schein 1997, 3.)

Each culture makes its own assumptions about others. This is based on assumptions that have been developed through values and consistent behavioral norms. Each new member that enters a new culture does so with his or her own personal assumptions. Each layer of this cultural striation becomes progressively more individualistic and less overt in nature. (See figure 3)

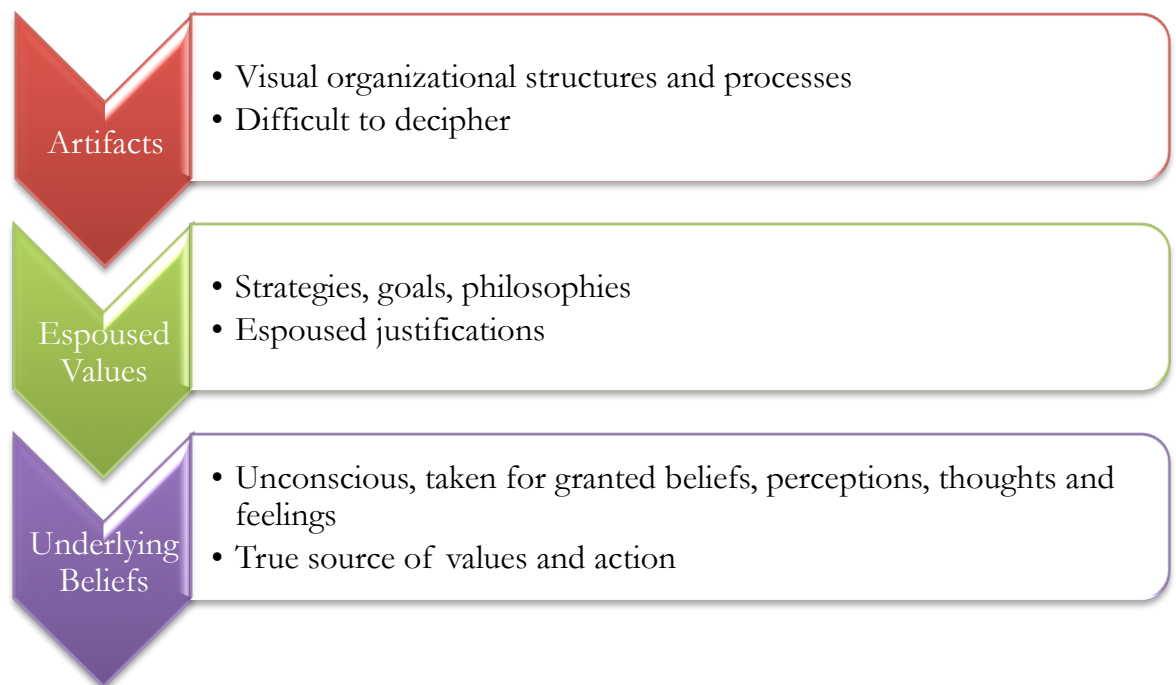


Figure 3. Adapted from Edgar Schein (Schein, 1997)

It is in this multi-dimensional quality of culture that gives insight into how it can and should be approached when developing, nurturing and maintaining it. The artifacts of company culture apply primarily to the organization. They can be present at the group and individual level; however, they are most common at the organizational level.

The espoused values within a company culture find their most significant expression at the group or team level. They work to establish a number of norms and rules within a company, such as: power structure, identity and rules of interaction. (See figure 4)

The underlying beliefs rest within the individual. This is where true values lie. When these personal values are not congruent with company values, a tension is created and presents itself in various ways, which typically include: a bad attitude, poor performance or excessive and unhealthy conflict. This also influences the individual view and relationship with time, which can impact performance as well if the nature of work is time sensitive.

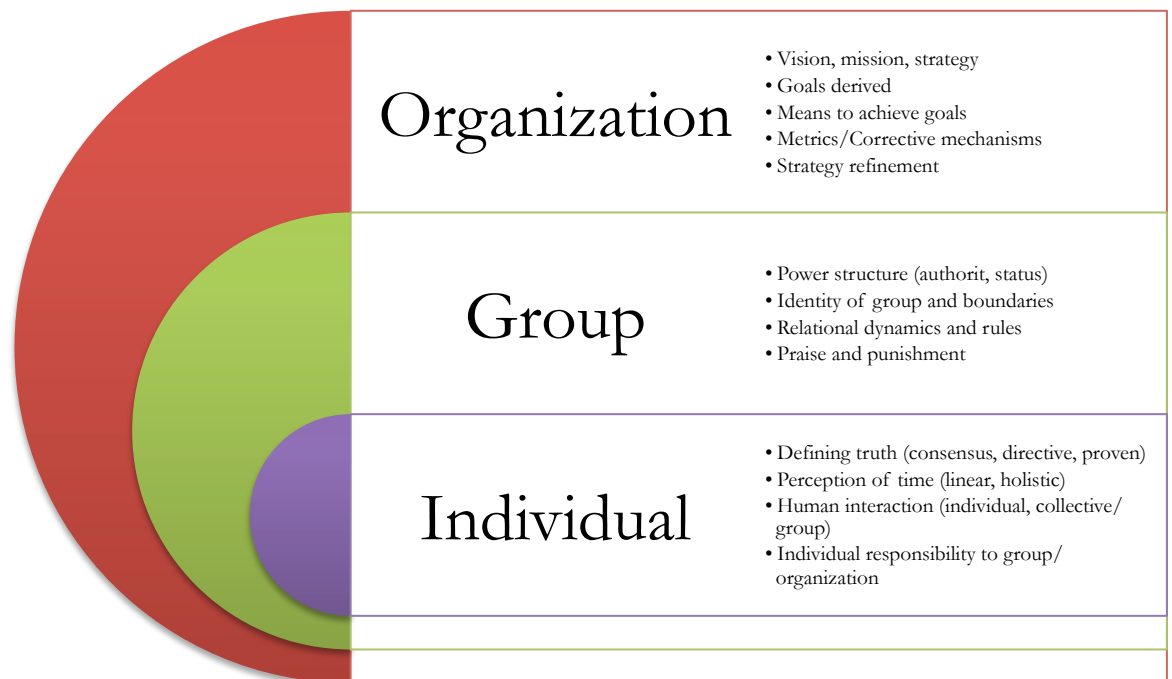


Figure 4. Adapted from Edgar Schein (Schein, 1997)

Although company culture is composed of these striations – artifacts, espoused values and underlying beliefs – and they primarily reside at the organizational, group and individual levels, respectively, it is not clearly delineated as such. There are interwoven intricacies among all three areas, which carry elements of each striation. There are influences of artifacts and espoused values at the individual level, just as there are influences of underlying beliefs and espoused values at the organizational level. It is this interconnectedness and lack of exact separation that makes company culture somewhat com-

plicated and a little messy from an OD perspective. It also shows that people are an intrinsic part of what makes culture happen in any context, especially business organizations.

Boston Consulting Group conducted a study in 2012 to understand what benefits, if any, may be realized if organizational culture focused on people as the most valuable asset. The results were quite telling. According to the report, “People Companies outperformed the market average in eight out of ten years.” Their performance was based on end of year closing prices of the S&P 500 in the United States. At the end of the 10 years, “People Companies” had an advantage of 99 percentage points in their market value over their less people-focused rivals (See figure 5). Even with the financial rewards shown by these statistics, the amount of organizations that can be called people companies has not increased much. (BCG 2012, 4.)



Figure 5. “People” Companies Outperform the Market Average (BCG, 2012)

2.4 Employee engagement

Employee engagement: “Full employee engagement represents an alignment of maximum satisfaction for the individual with maximum contribution for the organization.” (Rice et al. 2012, 4)

Employee engagement has its roots in employee satisfaction. Organizations began to understand the connection between the overall emotional state of the employee and employee performance. While satisfaction proved to be useful, it was imbalanced from the perspective of the company. What if the employee was satisfied, even when organizational goals were not being met? This posed a problem for companies.

While it has taken some time to arrive where engagement is currently, the most recent definition of employee engagement has taken into consideration the values, goals and strategy of the organization as well as the same elements as they relate to the employee. Engagement has come to represent a functional way of developing the organization through the development of the individuals within the organization. Previous attempts at this idea tended to favor one side or the other.

Developing the organization in spite of the employee realized short-term benefits. The organization saw increases in all the important operational metrics, especially the financial numbers. This created a sense of cynicism and feelings of being undervalued or expendable to the organization on behalf of the employees. This affected productivity and increased employee turnover. The short-term gains realized early on were quickly winnowed away through the administrative costs of replacing employees and the operational costs of reduced productivity. Both the organization and the employee lost something with this approach.

Developing the employee at the expense of the organization was a real boon for morale. People felt important and enjoyed the extra attention. The challenge this created was that operational goals were not being met; the organization suffered and ultimately created job loss through a lack of achieving those operational goals. Similarly, the organization and the employee suffered some form of loss with this arrangement.

Only when these two approaches were brought into balance did true employee engagement gain its proper footing within the area of OD. Going beyond employee happiness and focusing on behavior that produces results became a critical element to developing engagement (AonHewitt 2012, 3). The alignment of the aspirations, values and goals of both the organization and the individual has developed into the most effective method for healthy and effective employee engagement (BlessingWhite 2012, 5). By facilitating a more positive attitude about achieving organizational goals, on the behalf of the employee, it places the employee in a unique position. They assume a personal responsibility, in a business context, for the success of the organization. Likewise, the organization assumes a responsibility to develop the employee so they are able to realize their potential and gain skills that makes the success of the organization possible (IES 2004).

The BlessingWhite X Model (See figure 6) graphically represents the true nature of employee engagement, based on the definitions presented here. It underscores the critical nature of keeping organizational and individual goals in balance as a means to optimize the quality and effectiveness of employee engagement efforts within OD. The balance of contribution and satisfaction satisfies the needs of both parties.

Employee engagement has definite impact on performance metrics as well as bottom line numbers for organizations. Highly engaged employees are less likely to leave their current employer. In the US alone, businesses lose \$11 billion per year due to employee turnover. The average recruitment costs are 1.5 times annual salary and experts believe that this turnover rate will easily reach 65%. (Carnegie 2012, 4.)

Companies in the top quartile in engagement, meaning highly engaged employees, had twice the net income annually than the bottom quartile in engagement. Companies who consistently had high engagement numbers tripled the operating margin than that of companies who had lower engagement numbers (Kenexa 2008). Gallup studied over 23,000 business units globally to understand employee engagement's impact on

productivity. The top quartile in engagement experienced an average of 18% higher productivity than the bottom quartile in the same study (Gallup 2010).

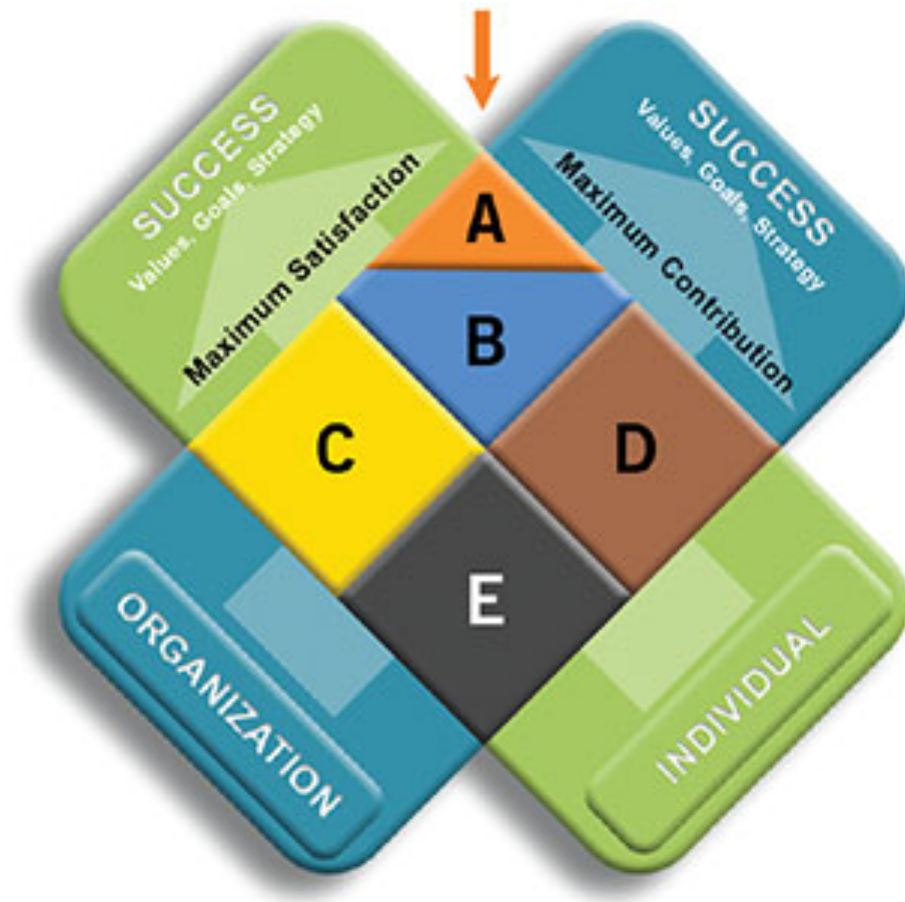


Figure 6. BlessingWhite X Model (BlessingWhite, 2012)

Reputable research companies have heavily documented the importance of employee engagement over the past 10-15 years. These companies include: Gallup, TowersWatson, Kenexa, BlessingWhite and Boston Consulting Group. The connection between employee engagement and operational metrics, like productivity, bottom line performance and innovation is unmistakable.

BlessingWhite is a consulting company that focuses almost exclusively on employee engagement. Each year they release an employee engagement study that assesses this key driver of organizational performance across the globe. For the past five years, employee engagement numbers have been statistically flat. Since 2008, there has been an increase in global employee engagement of only 4% (BlessingWhite 2013, 5). This is

close to the margin of error of most studies. The paucity of this change is supported by other research. Aon Hewitt published their 2013 Trends in Global Employee Engagement Report and their findings suggest a 3% increase in global employee engagement over the same period as the BlessingWhite study. According to the same Aon Hewitt study, “Employee engagement is a leading indicator of company growth – but lags economic forces.” (Aon Hewitt 2013, 3.)

2.5 Organizational development models

Due to the variety within HRD, four OD models will be used as the theoretical frame of reference. The function and strategy of various organizations, as well as management style, will influence which model – or at least some version of it – may be used in the organizations of those being interviewed for this thesis.

2.5.1 Kotter 8-Step Change Model

Dr. John Kotter, an entrepreneur and Harvard professor, has focused his career on helping professionals lead organizations better through creating successful change. Over his thirty years of research, he has concluded and proven that the failure rate for change initiatives in organizations is around 70%. His reasoning for this abysmal number is a lack of viewing change holistically, which results in a severely diminished ability to follow through on the change. (Kotter International 2012.)

In an effort to support organizations in becoming more successful and adept in their change efforts, Dr. Kotter developed the 8-Step Process, which is based loosely on the Kurt Lewin Change Theory. It is his belief that by improving an organization’s ability to change, they become much more able to thrive in a continuously adjusting marketplace. (See Figure 7)

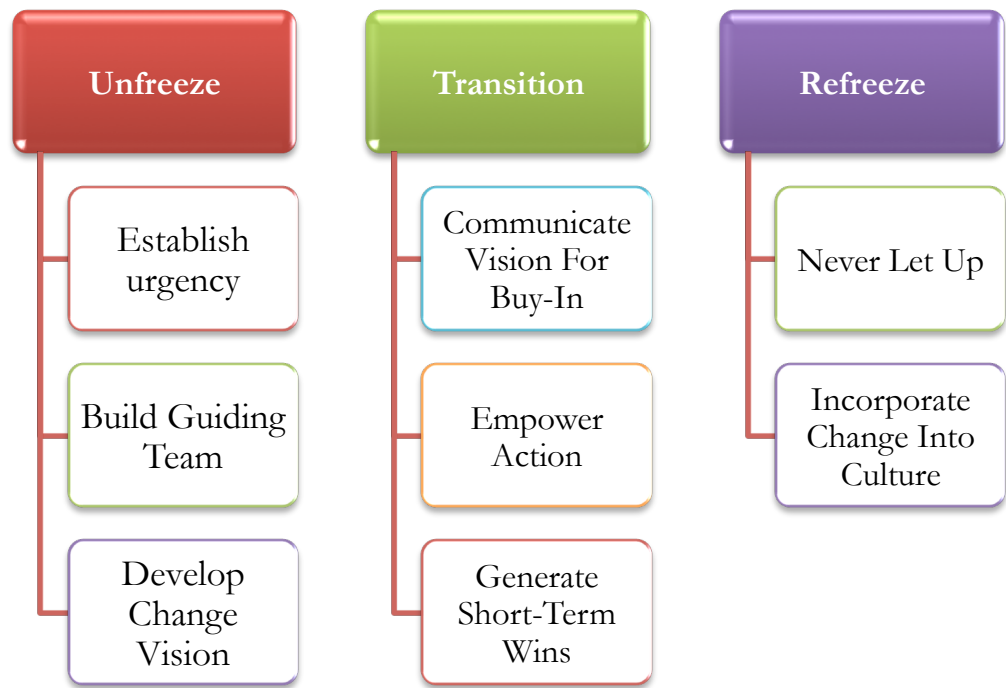


Figure 7. Adapted from Kotter 8-Step Change Model (Kotter International, 2012)

The first step in Lewin's process of changing behavior is to disrupt, or *unfreeze*, the contributing factors or situations that perpetuate the status quo. Because this state is considered in equilibrium, unfreezing is critical to alleviate the strain of resistance by the individual, as well as the conformity of the group. Kotter distinguishes three separate steps in this phase of Lewin's model – establish urgency, build a guiding team and develop a change vision. (Kotter International 2012.)

Kotter believes that immediate action will be taken once the need for change becomes more self-evident to them. He also asserts that the early adopters of the change must carry influence as well as possess the ability to encourage the teamwork necessary to facilitate the desired change. In creating a vision for the change, it aids in focusing the efforts of the change properly as well as strategy development for the implementation of the change. (Kotter International 2012.)

The second step in Lewin's three-step process is one of movement; a *transition*. The idea is to affect behavior in such a way that it moves the target (even if it is a system) to a new place of equilibrium. It is reframing reality in a way that is appealing to those involved. Communicating to people how the current status quo is of little to no benefit

to them, as well as pointing out the benefits of the desired status quo can help to accomplish this. (Kritsonis 2005, 2.)

In this transition phase, Kotter focuses on facilitating successful change. Healthy and effective communications play a key role in supporting the understanding and acceptance of the change vision. Systemic and/or structural impediments to the vision are removed and non-traditional thought is encouraged to support pro-active efforts regarding the desired change. Purposefully making small, quick wins that support the change vision very public reinforces the desired behaviors that move toward the next phase. (Kotter International 2012.)

The third and final step in Lewin's process is *refreezing*. The key point in this step is to wait to initiate it until the change has been completely implemented. If this is not done, then the sustainability of this step will be significantly diminished. Employees will gradually revert to the old status quo if this step is ignored or executed improperly. This step is the act of implementing new values into a community. (Kritsonis 2005, 2.)

Developing new norms, standards and traditions all work to refreeze things in a way that stabilize and reinforce the new equilibrium. This is often done through formal and informal mechanisms, such as: policies, procedures, rewards and punishment. Kotter suggests that hiring new employees who are aligned with the change vision, as well as promoting existing employees for the same reason, is an effective way to institutionalize the change. This works to also deepen the change so it becomes interwoven into the organizational culture. (Kotter International 2012.)

2.5.2 Shewhart's PDSA Cycle

William Deming was an American statistician who is best known for his "Plan-Do-Check-Act" cycle, which was originally labeled Shewhart's PDCA Cycle when developed in 1943. It was named after Walter Shewhart, who worked at Bell Laboratories, where Deming spent some time studying Shewhart's techniques. (Deming Institute 2012.)

In 1993, Deming modified the Shewhart cycle and expanded its focus to be applied for learning and improvement. Changing the “Check” portion and replacing it with “Study” characterized this iteration. This ultimately changed the name to the Shewhart’s PDSA Cycle.(See Figure 8)

Deming’s description of the model was that of a flow diagram. The purpose of this was for learning and improvement of a process or product. The reason for changing “Check” to “Study” was one of functionality and purpose. Using the word check implied a need to determine if a change resulted in improvement or not. Deming found this to be limiting in scope. By using the word study, there is an implication that one should build new knowledge from this phase. (Moen & Norman 2010, 26.)

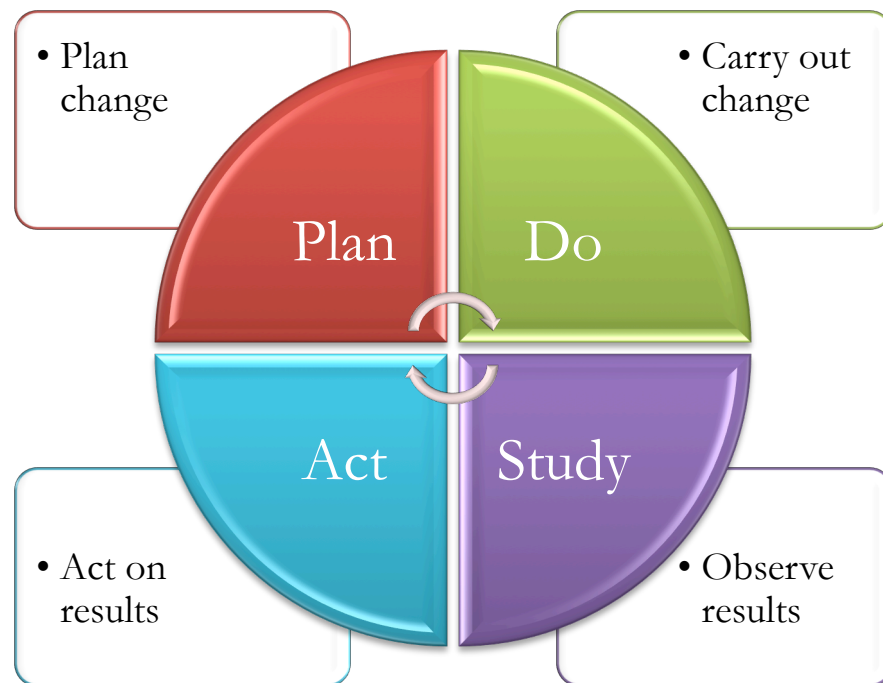


Figure 8. Shewhart’s PDSA Cycle (Moen & Norman, 2010)

The PDSA Cycle had three basic questions added to it as a means to supplement its purpose.

What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

This was the beginning stage of developing a broader context around the PDSA Cycle. It was the application of the three questions above, to the process of the cycle that became known as the API Model for Improvement in 2009. (Moen & Norman 2010, 27.)

The model is applicable in a vast number of situations and is easy to understand and use. The model is designed to support from very simple to the most complex improvement initiatives, and anything in between. (Moen & Norman 2010, 28.)

The model is applicable to nearly any type of organization, as well as varied groups and levels within them. The idea of the model is it is to provide a framework through which improvement methods may be applied. Theory based planning is critical to the use of this model. It is from this theory that generates the best questions that are meant to facilitate learning. As questions are considered, they give birth to predictions that aid in identifying the requisite data and tools to answer those questions. (Moen & Norman 2010, 28.)

One of the unique results of using this model is that it permits plans to adapt as organizational and individual learning takes place. It is a simple way to empower individuals so they are able to make decisions and take action in a way that provides pragmatic and useful results. (Moen & Norman 2010, 28.)

2.5.3 Organizational Development Process Model

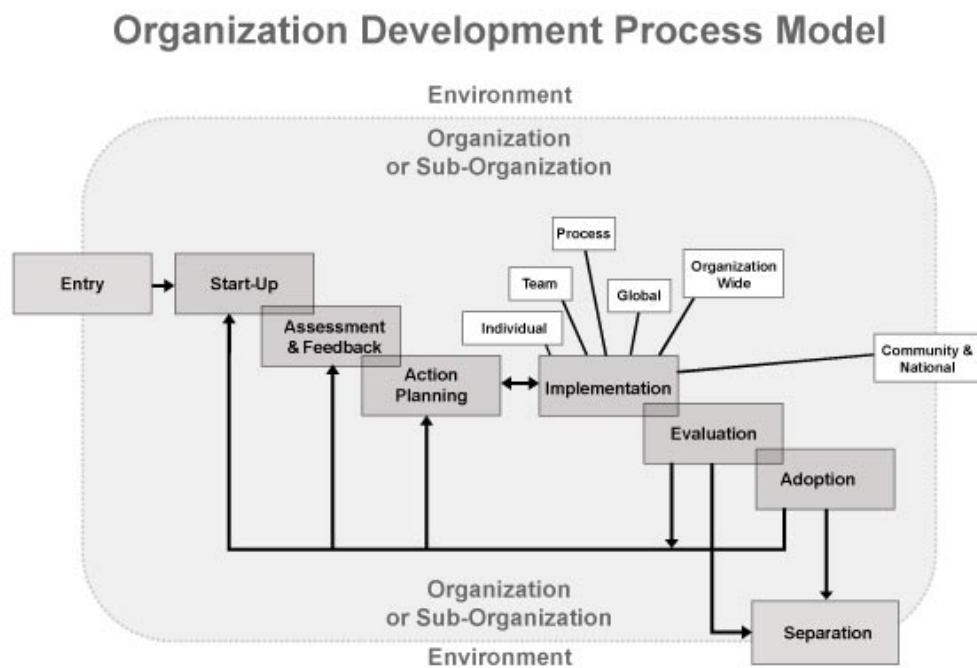
The Organizational Development Process Model (ODP) (see figure 9) is an expanded iteration of the PDSA Cycle. It is comprised of eight components, or phases, that share interdependent actions among the phases. The depth at which each phase can be applied varies based on the need and purpose. Some phases will be short, superficial, yet others will demand more resources and work on behalf of the individual applying the OD work. (McLean 2005, 20.)

The first phase is called the *Entry* phase. This is an assessment phase, on a fundamental level. It is used to explore the appetite for the proposed change within the organiza-

tion. Another aspect to this phase is to delineate under which conditions and expectations will the OD work take place. (McLean 2005, 20.)

Start-up is the next phase in the ODP model. This phase cannot begin until an agreement has been reached from the Entry phase. It is during this point of the model when the basic infrastructure needed to implement the OD work (i.e. special teams, executive sponsor, etc.). (McLean 2005, 21.)

The third phase in this process is called *Assessment and Feedback*, although it can occasionally be called *Analysis* or *Diagnosis*. In this phase, the OD practitioner works with stakeholders to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the company culture. This information is then given to the members of the organization. Prioritizing areas of interest based on required time and resource allocation can occur during this phase as well. (McLean 2005, 21.)



McLean, G. N. (2006). Organization development: Principles, processes, performance. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Figure 9. McLean ODP Model (2006)

Once a proper analysis has been completed, the OD practitioner then moves to the *Action Plan* phase. Based on what is discovered and decided in the previous phase, plans are developed regarding how the organization should approach the goals and objectives needed. (McLean 2005, 21.)

The following three phases occur sequentially and are closely related to one another. In the *Implementation* phase, the action plan is implemented. A common term used in OD for this is called *intervention*. For quality control purposes, the *Evaluation* phase asks the question, “How well did our intervention accomplish the objectives that were planned?” The final phase in this group is the *Adoption* phase. If the objectives were met, then the change becomes institutionalized. If the objectives were not met, this phase is skipped and the process begins over again. (McLean 2005, 22.)

The final phase in the ODP model is called *Separation*. At some point, no additional change is needed or wanted by the organization. The OD practitioner will withdraw from this capacity with the organization until the process begins at a later date. In any case, the OD practitioner can be an internal employee or an external consultant. (McLean 2005, 22.)

2.5.4 Appreciative Inquiry

The underlying premise of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is that through positive questions, one is able to discover what is right in an organization. The antithesis to this is that a solution development mentality is destined to seek out, and ultimately always find, problems. It takes actual experience and history and helps develop statements around positive moments experienced. It describes where the organization would like to be. (Hammond 1998, 6-7.)

There is a focus on asking questions in a way that both increase and fortify the positive potential of an organization or system. It seeks out a time when a system or organization was thriving, or at least at its most positive time of existence. The questions developed explore why that was and how it can be repeated. AI seeks to discover what

causes a system or organization to be the most effective and capably in terms of economy, ecology and humanity. (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005, 245.)

On a very basic level, AI approaches change from a holistic position. It is a perspective regarding the inner workings of human systems. There are a set of processes and practices intrinsically woven into AI and even a few models have been developed. (See figure 10) AI finds its roots in social constructionism, in that it asserts that human systems originated in the imagination and that they are capable of being changed in the same manner. It is the belief in AI circles that whatever is needed can be imagined and summarily created. (Watkins & Mohr 2001, xxxi.)

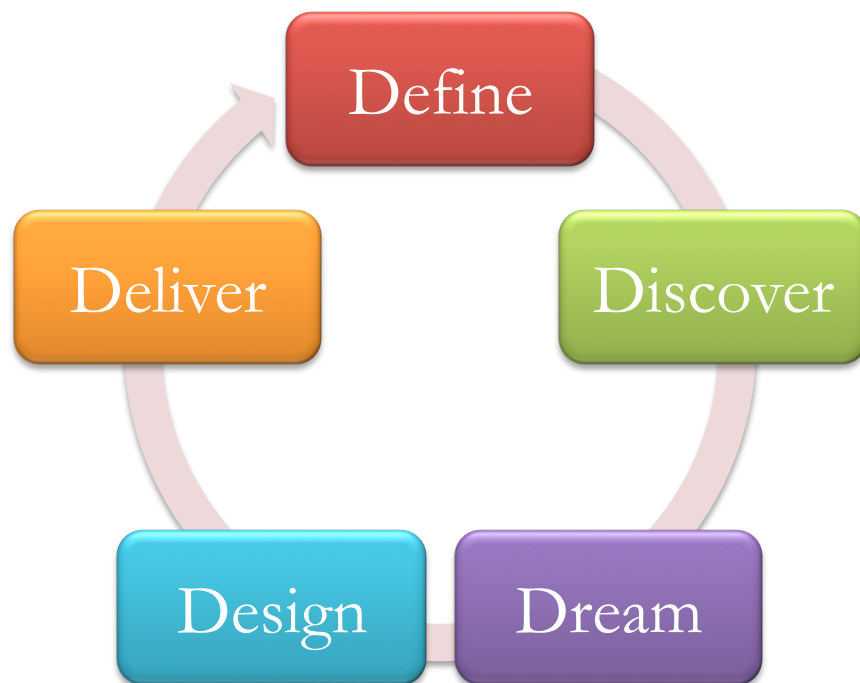


Figure 10. Adapted from Appreciative Inquiry Model (Cooperrider, 2000)

There are five original principles associated with AI. They are: Constructionist, Simultaneity, Anticipatory, Poetic and Positive.

Constructionist

This carries the notion that reality and identity are co-created. It is relativistic in nature, so there is no sense of absolute truth; truth is local to the individual and circumstances. Instead of objectively seeing things as they are, we see things as we are psychologically.

Everyone is deeply connected to everyone else is also a key component to this principle. The idea that reality is constructed through language is also given significance. (Kelm 2005, 2.)

Simultaneity

The idea that our questions create the world in which we live (as in the language dictating reality in the Constructionist principle). Once one begins to question, this principle states that change begins at that moment. There is also a belief that when a question is “unconditionally positive”, it possesses transformational qualities. There is also encouragement to develop a sense of wonder. (Kelm 2005, 2.)

Anticipatory

This is in line with the positive thinking creates positive results mentality. There is also a belief that vision creates fate and what we believe, we conceive. (Kelm 2005, 2.)

Poetic

This principle primarily gives attention to that which we give focus. The notion that we should look for what we want more of, instead of less of. Become more appreciative of what already exists is another key component to this principle. The idea that whatever we focus on tends to grow also belongs to this principle. (Kelm 2005, 2.)

Positive

In order to broaden thinking and build things, we must exercise positive emotions. The more that this positive core is appreciated and acknowledged, it will begin to expand and grow. This principle also encourages people to identify and leverage the strengths they have. (Kelm 2005, 2.)

3 Research design and methods

The research used for this thesis is qualitative in nature, in the form of semi-structured interviews, which were the primary data collection method. Secondary data was collected through research and included: online research, books, white papers, industry studies and academic publications. The small degree of quantitative research done for this thesis includes: deductions, generalizations and critical thinking. This was required in order to fully comply with the PO.

3.1 Research design

The use of a considerable amount of desktop research was conducted for this thesis, as well as for nearly two years prior to its writing. The deductive reasoning, generalizations and critical thinking elements were given impetus from the previous desktop research, which included: anthropology, sociology and psychology. The purpose of this broad array of research was to understand how humans function in groups on a fundamental level, minimizing the bias of context. The assumption was made that there was no immediate threat of life or danger for the group and no other aspects of the group's environment would cause significant duress.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted both in person and through some form of technology (i.e. email, Skype, chat, etc.). There was no deviation to the questions, regardless of audience. There were two primary categories of interviewees for the sample: HR/OD practitioners (within an organization) and HR/OD consultants (external to an organization).

The professionals who regularly work in this area were presented with the same questions as a means to acquire a subjective view of OD and how leadership, culture and engagement impact it. As a means to ascertain a trend, the sample size for the interviews consisted of 10 participants. Part of the selection criteria was that they be geographically diverse, from various industries/sectors and that the interviewees had a senior leadership role that gave considerable insight into their respective organizations.

3.1.1 Theory background

Whereas quantitative research is more about administering a set of structured questions with a preconceived list of response options to a large group of respondents, qualitative research is more focused on what people do and say. In quantitative research, recognizing who chose which predetermined responses is a matter of filtering. Qualitative research requires analyzing, coding and interpreting the responses of people that are more free form and not standardized.

One key thing provided by qualitative research is the insight it lends to behavior. It makes room for a more subjective perspective of an issue from those who are actually experiencing. The lack of predetermined responses provides an opportunity to recognize trends or inclinations of how people respond to scenarios or situations based on a defined set of parameters. Semi-structured qualitative interviews offer flexibility based on previous responses. It allows for the ability to generalize about the segment of population represented by the sample.

A non-probability sampling method was chosen (purposive sampling). The reasoning behind choosing this particular method was to gain expert insight into the subject matter of the research as a means to augment its quality. The sample was selected to include professionals who were unfamiliar with my work on this topic. This was designed to act as a control mechanism to limit bias in the results. This was not designed to generalize the entire population, but rather only the segment group of HR/OD professionals.

3.1.2 Challenges of chosen method

If spontaneous questions are used occasionally in the interview process, the answers become quite difficult to quantify and analyze. If these spontaneous questions are asked to some respondents and not others, it can easily be seen as unfair or misleading. Qualitative research is also quite time intensive and requires excellent interviewing skills. It can also be prone to bias, based on how the question battery is developed, as well as what spontaneous questions are asked. (Burns & Bush 2014, 150.)

Researchers, especially when inexperienced, can experience a sort of data shock. A sense of feeling overwhelmed by the data can cause poor coding of the results for proper analysis. Mind mapping and attempting to manage the various elements of the resultant data can allow bias to organize information inaccurately. Qualitative research is also much more difficult to replicate for further research on the same topic. This makes it much less likely to uncover any existing bias of the researcher. Because of the selective nature of qualitative data, it is not generalizable to a wider population segment. Qualitative data is also grossly open to misinterpretation. (Burns & Bush 2014, 150.)

3.2 Data collection methods

A mixed mode was used as part of the data collection method, which included person administered informal interviews and computer administrated open-ended interviews via email.

Interviews were used as the primary data source. A thematic analysis has been conducted of the interview responses. This provided an opportunity to gain a more personal and subjective insight into perceptions regarding OD as it is influenced from leadership, culture and engagement. This data has been utilized as a means to deduce the most relevant solution to meet the project objective than what would have been otherwise gleaned from a single quantitative research tool, such as a survey.

In order to augment research for the thesis, secondary data was used as well. This data came from sources, such as: books, internet sources (blogs, etc.), case studies, relevant white paper publications, professional experience and other research associated with the scope of the thesis.

The secondary data was primarily collected from theory books and related material obtained from Internet sources. The secondary data was used as a control as an attempt to recognize any confusing or conflicting anomalies in the data that was gathered

from the primary research. It also proved reliable in the generalization of the data collected from the primary research.

3.3 Interview framework

Because the commission company was concerned there was a lack of responsiveness and efficacy in some OD efforts, an opportunity to create a product to help shore up this gap was the focus of the PO. In order to ensure its usability, the importance of interviewing the concerns of the end user of the product became evident.

The question battery developed for the interviews (Attachment 1) was partially designed based on the theory framework developed for the key concepts of this thesis. The other basis for the questions used for the interviews was in order to be as compliant with the PO as possible.

4 Data collection

The bulk of the data was collected through some electronic means. Email was the primary collection method; however, there were some interviews conducted through Skype as well as in person. There were 14 questions (Attachment 1) that covered four main areas: General information, Leadership, culture and engagement's effect on OD, Challenges or failures with current OD models and approaches and Viable alternatives.

The target group that comprised the sample for the qualitative research consisted of HR/OD professionals. This group was segmented into two separate groups made up of internal practitioners (within organizations) and external practitioners (consultants). They were purposefully chosen based on geographic and industry/sector diversity; six different countries were represented in this sample (USA, UK, Sweden, Canada, Finland and Australia). A total of 18 questions were sent and the final sample size was 10 respondents (55%). All respondents answered 100% of the questions of the interview.

Eight unstructured spontaneous conversations on the same topic as the semi-structured interview questions took place over the two-year time frame of personal research. The information gathered from these conversations further strengthens the data gathered by the qualitative research conducted for this thesis. Each of these conversations took place with the same group as represented by the sample.

4.1 Data analysis

The research data was categorized into the following groups: geography, professional role, similarity in responses (thematic analysis) and any alignment with OD models. The goal was to understand if there was a significant influence that geography, and ultimately national culture, had on the results. The data was also compared against the theory of the OD models, as well as the definitions developed for leadership, culture and engagement.

Any gaps between the theory and practical application were addressed by asking why the survey participants believed this to be a common or acceptable practice within their

organization or with their clients. The sample consisted of six external HR/OD professionals (consultants) and four internal HR/OD professionals. The least amount of experience among the participants was 15 years and the most amount of experience was 29 years.

The interpretation of the data was primarily driven by a comparative analysis of the responses as well as personal knowledge and experience in this area of study. When a response was unclear or vague, follow up questions were sent to clarify the response so as it could be properly categorized. The analytical induction of the similarities among the data, based on the above methods, was used to develop the concepts that led to the creation of the product presented in this thesis.

4.2 Interpretation of data

The data suggests some similarities and trends across the sample. The most obvious trend was that nearly all of the participants consistently develop their own solutions and do not use any particular OD model. Further qualitative research into the thinking behind this trend revealed that there was a sense of restrictiveness regarding the current models. This produced a reticence to use these models, as the participants believe they limit the possibilities of developing a solution that fits the problem, but rather forces the problem to fit the solution. This trend did not seem to be influenced by geography or function.

The main differences were the way in which leadership, culture and engagement affected their OD efforts and how they were approached. Because of the varying needs that come from vision and strategy, each area was approached differently in its implementation for OD. The data suggests that this could be the aspect where most models begin to feel too restrictive for HR/OD professionals. Having more freedom to express organizational identity in and through these areas appears to be a high priority.

There was overwhelming agreement that leadership, culture and engagement directly impact OD (Attachment 2) and its quality by nearly all participants. How they impact OD was less clear and no trend presented itself in the data. There was no trend or de-

finite way to design leadership, culture or engagement that was consistent across the entire sample. The nature and individuality of each organization seemed to dictate the manner in which these elements were addressed.

5 Results

Of all the participants in the sample, 90% of them indicated that they did not use any OD model in their respective organizations or with their clients. The reasoning for this was that they believed that a “packaged” approach was not practical and did not fit the unique aspects of their OD needs.

A significant majority of the participants stated that they created bespoke solutions to their OD efforts, yet the data suggests that these solutions focused on leadership, culture and engagement mostly separately from one another as individual initiatives within the OD work of the participants. The data showed that there was some occasional overlap, for example leadership with culture, but it was rare and irregular in its implementation.

None of the data showed that a unified approach to leadership, culture and engagement has been used for OD purposes among any of the participants. There was no suggestion in the data that implied the participants had neither concern nor an overt understanding of interdependent relationships present among leadership, culture and engagement and their collective influence on OD efforts.

5.1 Conclusions

The research for this thesis revealed a clear picture of where OD continually suffers a lack of both responsiveness and effectiveness. The lack of desire to use existing OD models, because of their seemingly restrictive nature, makes room for an alternative that provides more flexibility in its application.

There is a significant disconnect in how the elements assigned in the PO – leadership, culture and engagement – impact how OD work is approached and accomplished practically within organizations. The fact that 90% of the respondents said they did not use a particular OD model presents an opportunity for a more viable solution that meets the needs of OD professionals. The key seems to be that it isn’t so prescriptive

(or proscriptive) that it becomes so restrictive that it is unable to be optimally effective or responsive.

Each of the three areas addressed by the PO are typically dealt with individually. Although when culture is the primary focus, there is a discussion regarding leadership; however, this is more of an ancillary function than it is a primary focus. The same is true for engagement and the cultural or leadership implications of doing that piece well.

The usual manner in which OD is managed regarding leadership, culture and engagement, is surprisingly fragmented. Various third parties are often involved to ensure that development happens well in a tightly defined area. For example, a leadership consultant may be brought in for a new initiative. Through that consultative relationship, some new training materials may be developed or purchased through yet another third party. Tangentially, a new leadership development program may be built to aid in succession planning. The goal is to “get leadership right”.

Similar actions take place regarding culture and engagement. Although it seems to be unintentional, the apparent prevailing school of thought seems to be that if each individual area is done well then collectively they should all work equally well as a whole. The research for this thesis conclusively disproved this notion. The shortcoming for OD in this context is that there is little to no focus, nor full understanding, of how leadership, culture and engagement organically relate and interact with one another.

5.2 Product developed

The research conducted for this thesis, as well as my personal research and professional experience, showed a predictable relationship among all three areas. It also revealed the relational dynamics at play between each successive coupling that impact the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD.

Because of the fragmentation problem with OD efforts discovered through the research of this thesis, the product developed was designed to unify the three areas ad-

dressed by the PO: leadership, culture and engagement. The naturally occurring relationships at play in these three areas were considered and a basic framework was developed. Once this was established, the relational connections between each of these areas was defined and added to the framework; this finalized the basic structure of the model.

Further consideration was given to the cultural neutrality constraint, as well as the desire to limit the obtrusive nature of implementing the product in an organizational setting. Understanding the needs of applying the framework in an OD setting was juxtaposed with the frustrations communicated in the responses from the interview questions. It was also compared with the suggested components of what a viable solution should include according to the respondents of the sample.

Defining the use of the model and the best way to implement it was a key focus in its development. Careful attention was given to explaining the best way to understand the concept of the product and then how to practically apply it in an organizational setting. Due to the overwhelming response of frustration in this particular area, ways in which the model can provide flexibility to OD efforts was important to be considered a viable alternative by the sample. By meeting this demand, the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD can be increased through its use, while still allowing the organization to retain its identity through the HRM function.

6 OD Unification Model of The Leadership Advisor

Leadership influences company culture, but it does not directly create it. Company culture is created through the various cultural drivers that create any type of culture (i.e. rituals, underlying beliefs, history, etc.) (Gostick & Elton 2010, 197). Leadership, through actions, decisions and language actually creates a context (see figure 11) out of which culture is developed (Malby 2007, 3). This context provides a framework for the creation of rituals. It is this context that reinforces and communicates underlying beliefs (Schein 2004, 292).

Just as leadership influences company culture, company culture plays an extremely influential role in employee engagement; however, it does not create engagement directly. Company culture, in any industry or sector, creates one thing consistently and that is emotion. (Carnegie 2012, 6.) There is always an emotional response to culture. Whatever norms and accepted behavior are at play within an organization, the members of that culture will have an emotional response to it (Sheridan 2012, 187-195). The quality of that emotional response will dictate the quality and magnitude of employee engagement (Hamel 2012, 153-162).

This is different for each organization. One organization, such as a non-profit (NGO), may actually benefit from the emotion of hate, whereas a call center environment would suffer from that particular emotion. The hate one feels for a social injustice that is addressed by an NGO could be reinforced by company culture and channeled to have a very beneficial response and sense of engagement. Emotions are neutral, in this sense, and the quality and value of each emotion is actually framed by the nuances of the company culture as well as organizational and departmental function.

Engagement cannot create leadership, but it does influence it. The relational connector between the two is that of behavior (Karsan & Kruse 2011, 157). Highly engaged employees behavioral response to that level of engagement is one of leadership. Although the employee may not have an official title that implies leadership, their engagement

will cause them to behave in ways similar to that expected of leadership – taking initiative, solution-focused, working beyond their job description. (Clark 2012.)

The behavior caused by engagement levels (performance) will cause leadership to make different decisions. When behavior results in poor performance, leaders will make different decisions that will influence culture. This, in turn, impacts engagement that lends influence to leadership again. In this sense, the OD Unification Model is cyclical in nature. Beginning with leadership and working clockwise towards behavior is the most effective way to understand it.

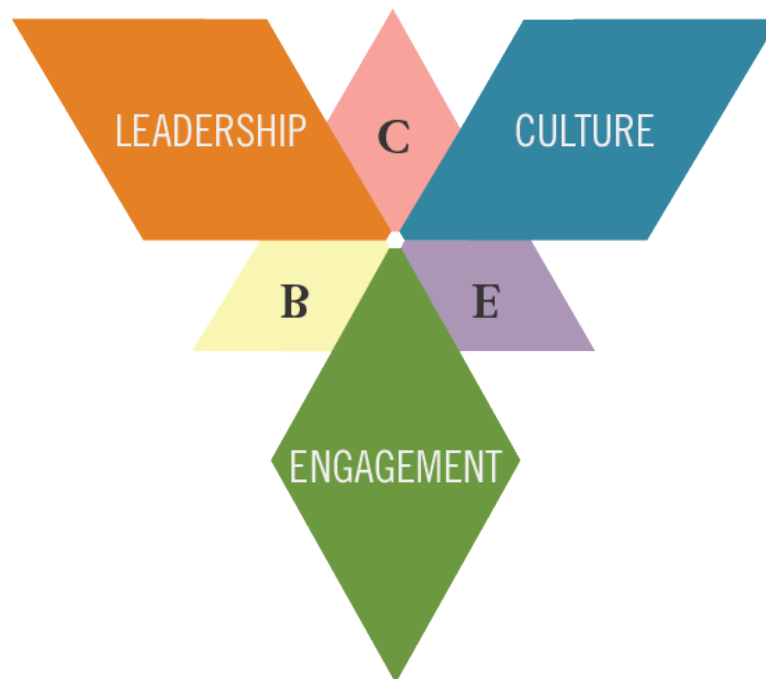


Figure 11. OD Unification Model

Its implementation, however, must be done in reverse beginning usually with behavior (or performance). If there is a particular behavior desired, it should not be first met with the question “What can leadership do to change this?” The first point of interest needs to be the preceding element of the model, which in this case would be engagement. Understanding how engagement produces the desired behavior is a critical first step to being successful in the overall effort. Critically discussing what emotion(s)

would best facilitate the optimal level of engagement for the desired behavior would be the next step. This process would continue through culture and context until there was clarity as to what leadership decisions and actions should be taken in order to achieve specific behavior.

It is important that stakeholder groups are defined and prioritized within the organization; especially based on their contribution to the success of any OD efforts. The emotional needs of the IT department will be considerably different than those of the Marketing department. Without addressing this, an assumption that the entire organization will have a homogenous emotional response to stimuli, which is inaccurate.

By understanding these emotional segments, leadership gains greater insight into which cultural drivers must be agitated, and in what manner, so as to elicit the emotional response that leads ultimately to the desired behavior. Attempting to bypass this part of the model by writing policies and procedures will only produce compliance. This is the lowest form of performance an organization can experience. Motivated choices done through individual desire and initiative will produce a much more effective performance level. This allows organizations to re-position KPIs to monitor, instead of being punitive in nature.

The OD Unification Model is not prescriptive regarding what culture should be, nor does it dictate what emotions or behavior suits an organization best. It does not give a list of actions that should be done by leadership. It does not compete with any aspect of company culture or geographic culture. In this sense, it is a framework that recognizes and capitalizes on the natural relationships between leadership, culture and engagement within groups of people, regardless of function. This unique quality is what adds to its neutrality.

This model can be used in three ways. Firstly, it can act as a communication tool. Utilizing this model within an organization does not have to interrupt operations or existing initiatives. It provides a common language for members of the organization to use as they are planning and implementing those initiatives. This model can be used inter-

nally as well as with vendors along the supply chain. The decision rests with the organization.

Secondly, the model can be used as a training tool. In the process of OD efforts, training is a key area of focus. Developing managers and leaders to understand how leadership, culture and engagement interact with one another organically empowers them to be more effective and responsive in leading their teams and making quality decisions. This serves to increase autonomy (a significant driver of engagement) within teams and the organization as a whole.

Finally, the OD Unification Model is a leadership tool. Having a more holistic view of OD, regarding leadership, culture and engagement, is of great value to organizational leaders. Developing a deeper understanding of the intricacies associated with the interdependent relationships addressed by the model provides leaders greater insight into their organization and how change can be managed well.

One of the most beneficial features of this model is that it allows room for organizations to be as unique as they choose to be. It makes room for the DNA of a company to express itself and helps make it a more impacting quality that has purpose, focus and direction. The most competitive companies have developed internal baselines over being repeatedly swayed by external benchmarks. Every benchmark began as a baseline for at least one organization. The OD Unification Model facilitates the ease with which internal baselines can be created.

As requested in the PO, this model is designed to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of OD, regarding leadership, culture and engagement. It is also minimally intrusive to operations in its implementation. Because it is structured as a framework and has very few prescriptive elements, the model is as culturally neutral as possible and fully viable for multinational organizations in various industries and sectors.

More study can be made to refine and deepen the potential applications of the OD Unification Model to move beyond organizations and be considered for social and

community issues, as well as other humanitarian projects. The modes of implementation for this model have yet to be fully defined, so the possibility to explore all of these options would be of interest for further research.

It is important to note that the OD Unification Model is the intellectual property of The Leadership Advisor, the commissioning party for this thesis, and any unauthorized use of this model without the expressed, prior written permission of The Leadership Advisor could be in violation of copyright and/or trademark laws. Please contact the company for any information or questions regarding this model.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Interview questions

OD Interview Questions

General

1. Are you an HR/OD practitioner in an organization or an HR/OD consultant (external)?
2. In what country are you located?
3. Years experience in this type of role or similar in nature?

Leadership, culture and engagement affect on OD

4. Does leadership impact OD? In what way?
5. Does company culture impact OD? In what way?
6. Does employee engagement impact OD? In what way?

Challenges or failures with current OD models and approaches

7. Do you use any particular OD model(s) in your work (i.e. PDSA Cycle, Appreciative Inquiry, etc.)? Which one(s)?
8. Do the models used meet all of your OD needs? Where do they come short?
9. Why do you believe this failure or shortcoming occurred? What were the contributing factors?
10. Do you believe OD is as responsive and effective as it could be? Why or why not?

Viable alternatives

11. Based on any shortcomings of current approaches, what do you believe should be done differently?
12. What key components *must* be a part of the alternative to make it viable?
13. Do you believe this will work for any industry/sector? Why or why not?
14. What is your biggest frustration with current OD practices? Why?

Attachment 2. Emerging trends from interview results

	Internal HR/OD Professional	External HR/OD Professional
Direct influence on OD from leadership?	✓ (100% agree)	✓ (100% agree)
Direct influence on OD from culture?	✓ (100% agree)	✓ (100% agree)
Direct influence on OD from engagement?	✓ (100% agree)	✓ (90% agree)
Use of any OD models?	✗ (100% agree)	✗ (80% agree)
Is current OD efforts effective or responsive as they could be?	✗ (100% agree)	✗ (90% agree)
Most important component(s) of alternative solution?	Flexibility & customizable for organization	People focus & customizable for organization
What should be done differently for OD to be more effective and responsive?	Realistic expectations (time, process, etc.)	Match organizational style and personality